

Excerpts From Oswald's Narrative

Following are excerpts of a narrative by Lee Harvey Oswald of his life in the Soviet Union, as published by the Warren Commission:

The lives of Russian workers is governed, first and foremost, by the "collective," the smallest unit of authority in any given factory, plant, or enterprise. Sectional and shop cells form a highly organized and well supported political organization. These shop committees are in turn governed by the shop and section party chiefs who are directed by the factory or plant party secretary.

This post carries officially the same amount of authority as the production director or president of the plant, but in reality it is the controlling organ of all activities at any industrial enterprise, whether political, industrial or otherwise personal relations.

The party secretary is responsible for political indoctrination of the workers, the discipline of members of the Communist party working at the plant and the general conduct and appearance of all members.

The Minsk Radio and Television plant is known throughout the Union as the major producers of electronics parts, and sets. In this vast enterprise created in the early 50's, the party secretary is a 6'4" man in his early 40's—has a long history of service to the party. He controls the activities of the 1,000 communist party members here and otherwise supervises the activities of the other 5,000 people employed at this major enterprise in Minsk.

This factory manufactures 87,000 large and powerful radio and 60,000 television sets in various sizes and ranges, excluding pocket radios, which are not mass produced anywhere in the U.S.S.R.

I worked for 23 months at this plant, a fine example of average and even slightly better than average working conditions. The plant covers an area of 25 acres in a district one block north of the main thoroughfare and only two miles from the center of the city with all facilities and systems for the mass production of radios and television; it employs 5,000 full time and 300 part-time workers, 58 per cent women and girls.

This factory employs 2,000 soldiers in three of the five mainshops, mostly these shops are fitted with convair belts in long rows, on either side of which sit the long line of bustling women.

The lack of unemployment in the Soviet Union may be explained by one of 2 things. Lack of automation and a Beaurocratic corps of workers in any given factory. These people are occupied with the tons of paper work which flow in and out of any factory. Also the number of direct foremen is not small to the ratio of workers in some case 1-10, in others 1-5, depending on the importance of the work.

These people are also backed by a small army of examiners, committees and supply checkers and the quality control board.

These people number (without foremen) almost 300 people, total working force 5,000.

To delve into the lives of the workers, above all, visit most of the shops one after another and get to know the people. The largest shop employs 500 people; 85 per cent women and girls; females make up 60 per cent of the work force at this plant.

Here girls solder and screw the chassis to the frame attaching, transistors, tubes and so forth. They each have quotas depending upon what kind of work they are engaged in. One girl may solder 5 transistors in four minutes while the next girl solders 15 wire leads in 13 minutes. The pay scales here vary but slightly with average pay at 80 rubles without deductions include 7 rubles, general tax, 2.50 rubles for bachelors and unmarried girls and any deductions for poor or careless work. The inspectors may care to make further down the line. They start teams of two, mostly boys of 17 or 18, turning the television on the convair belts right side up, from where there has been soldering to a position where they place picture tubes onto the supports. These boys receive for a 39 hour week, 65-70 rubles, net counting deductions.

For a good cross section of the Russian working class I suggest we examine the lives of some of the 58 workers and 5 foremen working in the experimental shop of the Minsk radio plant.

Our shop head Stephen Tarasavich Velchek is a stout open faced and well skilled metal worker who, although he hasn't got a higher education which is now a prime requisition for even a foreman's job, he managed to finish a 4 year night school specialty course and through the help of the director of the factory, Mr. Ukayvich, became shop head in an important segment of this large plant, employing 5,000 people.

Stephen has an almost bald head except for a line of hair on the left side of his head, which he is forever combing across his shiny top. Aged 45, he is married with two children aged 8 and 10. It may be explained that Russians seem to marry much older than their American counterparts, perhaps that can be explained by the fact that in order to receive an apartment, people often must wait for 5 or 6 years and since security is so unstable, until a commonly desired goal is reached, that is, an apartment for oneself, most Russians do not choose to start families until later in life. Stephen is responsible to the factory committee and director for the filling of quotas and production quantity.

His foreman Zorof is 38 years old, has a wife and 15 month old baby, not too long ago moved out of his one room flat without kitchen or private toilet, into a newly built apartment house and flat of two small rooms, kitchen and bath, a lux-

ury not felt by most Russians. A tall thin man with dark creases in his face, his manner, nervous, spontaneous and direct, betrays his calling. His job, keep the working on the premises going as quickly and efficiently as possible. His Assistant, Jr. Foreman Lavcook, is much younger, ten year younger, enigmatic, handsome, quick, he climbed to his post through a night school degree and a sort of rough charm, which he instinctively uses in the presence of superiors.

The remaining 41 workers are divided about half into 18-22 year olds, new metal workers, trying to fulfill their obligatory two years at a factory, before going on to full time day studies at the local University, or one of the specialized institutes, and older workers who have been working at the plant for 4-6 years and occupy the middle number worker levels, 3, 4; these workers are aged about 24-30 and form the mass of laborers at the factory.

Most workers in Minsk come from peasant stock, which repopulated the city at the end of the 2nd World War. Like most Russians they are warm hearted and simple but often stubborn and untrustworthy.

May Day and other "demonstrations" are arranged as well as spontaneous receptions for distinguished guests. I remember when I was in Moscow in 1959 I was just passing in front of the Metropole restaurant when out of the side streets came a 10 man police unit which stopped all people on the street from passing in front of the entrance, surrounding the crowd and keeping them hemmed in (not detouring the flow of traffic, as would be expected) for 3 minutes, until right on schedule, an obviously distinguished foreign lady was driven up to the restaurant, where a meeting in her honor had been arranged. She was taken through the "spontaneous" welcoming crowd, after which the police were withdrawn, allowing the passers-by to continue.

Another instance of this was in 1961 when a Chinese delegation arrived in Minsk and was driven from the railway station to a house on the outskirts of the city. Even though it was 10:30 at night all along the way members of the MVD (security) forces ran into apartment buildings and student dormitories ordering people out on to the streets to welcome the arriving guests.

Although there was no prior notice of any delegation, another "spontaneous" welcoming committee met the calvacade of black limousines and dutifully waved back at the darkened cars with the slightly protruding yellowish waving hands.

I myself was visiting friends in the foreign language dormitory when we were called out for this purpose by a security agent. I went right along with all the others into the crowd and I do know this story to be not only true, but standard operating procedure.

But in order to get to know the workers, how they think, act, hope and have lived, I will take an example from the lower and middle and upper age

groups. Starting with the lower.

Usha Shoklievich, born in what is now south western Belorussian territory; he is 24 years old, makes 90 rubles a month, without deductions, he is married and has a young baby. He and his wife live in a small room in a house, the property of his inlaws. He is on the waiting list for a small flat, "hopes" to receive it in "four or five years," hopes to enter the University night course next year so that he can become a radio engineer. He went to school during and after the war in the east where his family took him during the evacuation. Moved still further east after an all out attempt at a drive by the Nazi's in which his mother was killed. After finishing his schooling at the age of 19, like most Russian boys, he was drafted into the Army, served in Hungary when the counter Revolution broke out as a jeep driver, when I asked him who started the war there, he says "American Imperialists" and "spies." When asked who he killed he says "he didn't kill anyone." When asked who was killed during the Revolution he says "Hungarians." Asked what he thinks of that Revolution, he says "It was a glorious victory for our forces."

A picture of a different sort is that cut by Aksonavich. Mild mannered, he served his army service along time ago, on the Leningrad front during the war. Married for ten years, he has three children. A hawk like nose, bushy eyebrows, profuse straw colored hair, he makes 115 rubles a month, lives fairly well, owns a television, radio and refrigerator in his two room flat with neighbors who share kitchen and bath. A very good arrangement for the Soviet Union. He pays 15 rubles a month rent, has a middle school education, had finished a metal workers course at night school at the night school facility of the University in 1958. He has been working at this plant for 5 years.

A skilled tradesman, he is respected and is a member of the shop production committee. Non-communist, he believes in the policies of the party as do almost all Russians. His hobby is fishing on the banks of the little creek near his home during the summer. Every morning he spends 20 minutes on a bus coming to work, this is the most inconvenient aspect of his otherwise simple and average life. Does he have money, personal belongings? "No money, but I have an apartment," that is the most important thing in life. People have been known to do odd, even unlawful things to get even a little higher on the housing waiting list such as faking the ownership of a baby or two to get special rating.

One man whose family received a Fiat not long ago is Orisses. At our shop a master, a shock worker and a Communist for many years, he is almost 60 years old. Now with dark but greying hair, long nose, and protruding cheek bones, set under very old and weighted eyes, contesting to his long years as a laborer, a laborer with his hands. During the war Orisses, too old to be taken

into the army in the first draft, remained in Minsk with his wife when the Germans arrived, lived here for 8 months, until things got too hot for him, as it did for most of the remaining population who didn't support the Germans outright, he fled into the deep pine forest with his wife where he served with the famed Guerilla fighters; as is well known, these people held most of the territory of Belorussia during the entire 4 years of occupation by the Germans of Minsk and other points in Belorussia.

Films carry the propaganda ball where books and newspapers leave off, with 90,872 movie houses in the U.S.S.R. with collective clubs bringing the total to 118,000 movie houses; the average number of times a Soviet citizen goes to the movies, per year, including men, women, and children is 16.5 times. There is a joke current in the Soviet Union as to why N. S. Khrushchev received his third hero of the Soviet Union medal, highest order in the Soviet Union, the answer is for his part in the film "Our Nikita Khrushchev," a documentary circulated in the summer of 1961, of old films showing Khrushchev in his younger days as a commissar on the Eastern front or touring Industries after the war.

Foreign films make up quite a large percentage of movies shown here since the young Soviet film industry is not well subsidized and cannot turn out half of the demand for films.

Television is organized and shown in order not to interfere with work in industries. Monday to Fridays programs start at 6:00 in the evening, quite enough to allow any work to get home in time for the start but not enough to allow him to take time off to watch television or become a television addict as we have in the U.S. Programs finish at 11:00 in the evening so that all the workers can get enough sleep.

Opera is also a favorite entertainment in the U.S.S.R. with 32 operas and ballet houses throughout the 15 republics. As compared with one in the United States, the metropolitan opera house in New York, that is because the Russians have their own operas written by their own Russian composers, while we have none. Here any person can tell you about such splendid operas as "Reiglo" "the Clown", "Queen of Spades", "Traviata" while in the U.S. most citizens are sadly lacking in this field of art due not to the falicity that we are uncultured as the Russians think, but due to the fact that we simply do [not] have the facilities to put such productions on.

Universal military training has been in force in the U.S.S.R.

for several years. Unlike the U.S., drafting always take place at 19 years of age all other reasons for exemption withstanding.

Disipline in the Russian army is supposed to be the most rugged in the world since top sergeants can hand out up to 15 day sentences to any private any time he wants to without a court martial for minor offenses.

When I told about the basic features of American military life in the U. S. Marine Corps, the ex-soldiers I knew usually

laughed and said we have no disipline but I'm quite sure the ohs and ahs were signs of admiration when I spoke of our "undisciplined" army especially the complete absence of political eatures under our system of separation of army and state, and also the fact that at the end of each work day we could put on civies and pile in a car and drive up to town to a movie or a dance, army discipline without a wall, with money in our pockets and our own military obligation clearly understood and in our own hands.